

EDITORIAL PAGE

# Diaper tax is a cost of convenience

DIAPERS BECAME a hot political item in Wisconsin this week.

The Kimberly-Clark Corp., which manufactures Huggies disposable diapers, sent letters to 100,000 mothers of young children in the state urging them to actively oppose a proposed 1 cent per diaper tax on the disposables.

This is all part of the vigorous debate going on in the state over a comprehensive recycling bill. Disposable diapers are one of the targets of the bill because they have grown dramatically in use over the past decade and now account for between 1 and 2 percent of all trash in overburdened landfills. Because they contain human waste, they also pose a health danger to the ground water.

In Vermont, the governor is proposing banning disposable diapers altogether. Nebraska has banned non-biodegradable diapers. Wisconsin is looking at a more reasonable approach — to levy the 1 cent per diaper tax to help offset the cost of recycling programs. The state in effect is asking consumers to pay a bit extra for the convenience of disposable diapers to help offset the headaches they cause.



RECYCLING  
Capital Times  
Agenda Item

If consumers feel they are being unfairly singled out for the diaper tax, they ought to know that the recycling bill also contains a recycling fee to be charged to all retailers and wholesalers, topping out at \$1,500 per seller, and a similar fee on all manufacturers, topping out at \$5,000.

There is also some concern that a diaper tax would be an unfair burden on low-income families. It is worth noting that disposable diapers — although they are very convenient — are also the most expensive diapering option, even without the 1 cent tax.

SHIFTING from a throwaway society to one that works to conserve and recycle means people must be willing to change some of their past practices. The diaper tax is an incentive for such change. The Legislature should retain it in the final recycling measure.

FOR THE CAPITAL TIMES

KONO PAKI  
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# Governor has the right idea about property tax relief

By RICHARD BERG

GOV. TOMMY THOMPSON recently introduced a welcome dose of rationality to the renewed debate over property taxes.

In separate meetings with overtaxed farmers and frustrated school board members, Thompson correctly identified runaway spending by local units of government as the primary cause for the continuing rise in property taxes. Thompson also properly assigned blame to the state's one-sided binding arbitration law for stripping local officials of the ability to effectively control property taxes.

Although some are trying to blame Gov. Thompson for the rise in property taxes, it wasn't Tommy Thompson who signed a



Richard Berg

1990 Dane County budget containing a 20.5 percent tax levy hike. It was Rick Phelps, the born-again spender.

IT WASN'T Gov. Thompson who recently suggested a 9.2 percent

spending increase in 1991 for the Madison Metropolitan School District. It was the local Duke of Taxation — Earl James Travis.

Gov. Thompson clearly understands that higher government spending produces higher property taxes. Unfortunately, the Democratic-controlled Legislature has rejected every meaningful Thompson initiative aimed at restricting local spending or giving local officials greater flexibility in controlling costs.

By obstructing meaningful and permanent property tax relief, the legislative majority has fueled the property tax firestorm at the same time they try to lay the blame for Wisconsin's high property tax at the governor's door-

step. To further confuse the public on this complicated issue, some in the Capitol have pounced on the Wisconsin lottery for what they characterize as a failure to produce meaningful property tax relief.

These same officials know — or should know — that the lottery's \$91 million profit from the last fiscal year pales in comparison to the almost \$4 billion statewide property tax bill. To suggest that the lottery money would have a significant impact on individual property tax bills is tantamount to the perpetuation of public ignorance on an issue that requires clarity, not more political smoke.

FRANKLY, the public is tired of the rhetoric, tired of the revenue

shell game, and is looking for action — not excuses. Where are the statesmen and stateswomen who used to put public interest ahead of partisan bickering? When will someone rise above the legislative mire to do what is right for the people of Wisconsin?

While election year property tax rebates will ease the short-term pain, property taxpayers need a long-term solution. The fall elections provide the next opportunity for Wisconsin taxpayers to elect a legislative majority that will support Gov. Thompson's on-target efforts to control spending. All candidates should be scrutinized on their ability to say no to the powerful special-interest groups which continually lobby in the

Capitol for more money and on their ability to say yes to property taxpayers who are demanding real, not imaginary, relief.

And, yes, Wisconsin's tax structure, particularly the heavy reliance on the property tax to fund public education, is a legitimate topic for political debate. But the first order of business must be to get local spending under control and to do it quickly.

Richard Berg is a former member of the Madison school board, a former staff member for the Dane County executive and the Wisconsin lottery, and was an unsuccessful candidate for mayor of Madison in 1989. He now works for the state Department of Health and Social Services.



## VOICE of the PEOPLE

### Hunter smeared Rubitsky's doubters

A QUESTION for liberals — particularly John Patrick Hunter:

Why is it that when someone charges someone else with "anti-Semitism," the liberal accepts the charge as being true? No inquiry is made. Facts are not wanted. Apparently this kind of "McCarthyism" is perfectly legitimate with liberals of a peculiar mindset.

I have particular reference to John Patrick Hunter's column of Jan. 23 on David Rubitsky in which he wrote the following about Col. John Mott, the officer who allegedly said that "Jews don't get the Medal of Honor," when, back in 1942, Rubitsky is supposed to have killed some 600 Japanese soldiers all by himself: "It is that earlier comment back in 1942 that Jews didn't deserve the medal that is unforgivable."

Of course that comment would be unforgivable if it had actually been made. Hunter apparently feels free to slander this man who is in his grave simply because David Rubitsky said so.

The truth of the matter is that the Awards Branch of the United States Army did indeed — to use Hunter's words — "pierce the mist of nearly half a century" — in a 276-page report that showed Rubitsky's story could not stand up to critical scrutiny.

MOREOVER, Rubitsky was able to smear the people of Edgerton with the brush of anti-Semitism — courtesy of John Patrick Hunter — as well as his fellow comrades-in-arms from Headquarters Company (Edgerton) 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd (Red Arrow) Division.

Hunter owes it to himself to get a copy of the Army report on Rubitsky and then share its contents in the spirit of truth and intellectual honesty. Perhaps then he will realize that Rubitsky's charges of anti-Semitism against everyone who questioned his claims were hogwash and then tender the appropriate apologies. Robert E. Nordlander Menasha

### Anti-pro-life demonstrators bigots

THE RECENT Right to Life rally in Madison on Jan. 20 provided some interesting insight into the two opposing views which

were represented there.

Most people have seen or read the reports that the group of over a thousand pro-life demonstrators was met by a small but vocal group of counterdemonstrators.

While the pro-life group staged a silent, peaceful protest, the counterdemonstrators chanted loudly and incessantly in an effort to disrupt the demonstration.

Although the pro-life demonstrators seemed to harbor no malice toward them, the counterdemonstrators clearly presented their attitude toward the pro-life demonstrators in one of their chants which went as follows: "Racist, sexist, anti-gay, born-again bigots, go away!"

It is true that this group of over a thousand people agreed on one thing: Abortion on demand should be outlawed. However, the group consisted of people from many different backgrounds and beliefs.

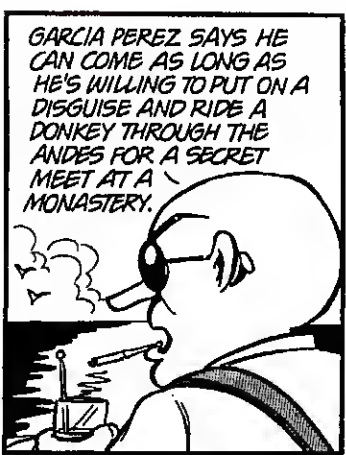
THEREFORE it is interesting that the counterdemonstrators took the liberty to accuse over a thousand people of being racist, sexist, anti-gay, born-again bigots, especially since the only thing they knew about these people was that they opposed abortion on demand.

The word "bigot" is defined as "one who is blindly intolerant of the views of others, especially in religion, politics and race." Synonyms include prejudiced, narrow-minded and biased. The pro-life demonstrators were silent. The counterdemonstrators were incessant in their diatribe.

Based on the words and actions of the two groups, which one more clearly fits the description of "bigot"?

Todd Schmittler  
Madison

### Doonesbury



## What do you think?

By TRICIA L. DEERING



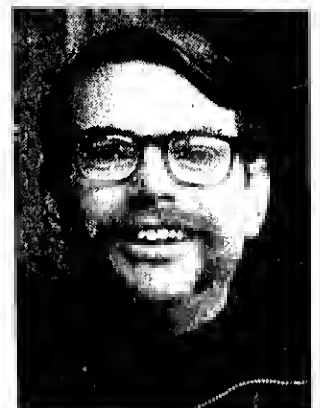
Brian Garnand, 26  
Grad student  
Madison

I think there should be a government program to provide it. I think health care is a human right. There's an unfair restriction on human rights and this is one of them.



Joyce Stokes, 19  
Student  
Madison

The government should help. If they need money to do it, they should take it from the defense budget.



Mark Midbon, 39  
Computer programmer  
Madison

I would be in favor of a nationwide mandatory health insurance. It costs the taxpayers money eventually anyway. It'd be cheaper to do it this way than the way it is handled now. Other countries successfully do it.



Tamra Bender, 25  
Receptionist  
Madison

I think they should come up with a uniform health care insurance for everyone. They should have employers contribute a certain amount. I think that way would be cheaper than what they pay now for individual policies.



Bret Thompson, 31  
Homeless  
Madison

I think if a person is working, he personally should take care of it, not the federal government. If a person has his or her five senses and is working, he or she should pay for it. The government should pay for senior citizens' or disabled people's health care.

### Dean Clinic does its fair share

I WAS surprised by your recent article "Does Dean Care?" It neglected to mention the significant efforts taken by Dean over the years to be fair to all patients — those with good and bad credit histories.

A patient with a financial hardship was never ignored if he/she made an effort to work with the medical center rather than ignoring monthly statements.

A few examples of Dean's fair-

ness include: annually writing off thousands of dollars as charity, referring patients to numerous financial help resources, participation in developing the State Medical Society's minimum income guidelines for senior citizens, and drought care (a relief program for financially strapped farmers.)

Dean does care for ALL patients — partially through fiscal responsibility.

Sbaron Paglini  
Former director of credit  
and financial services  
Peoria, Ill.

### Back endangered species funding

WHEN we think of the months of January and February we think spring will never come. However, each day gets a little longer, the temperature becomes a little warmer and spring finally arrives.

For many of us, spring regenerates the soul like a warm summer rain breathes life into our thirsty lawns. Unfortunately, spring also brings with it the stress of filing income taxes. However, there is a bright side to filing our tax re-

turns.

Making a donation to the endangered species fund on your Wisconsin income tax form will help many species escape extinction. This fund helps species ranging from endangered plants to the majestic bald eagle from becoming extinct. Aldo Leopold implied that we must treat the life around us as a community rather than a commodity. When a member of the community is endangered, it is our moral responsibility to help.

Michael A. Morgan  
Stoughton

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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